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THE ORIGIN AND TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS. X

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AN OUTLINE BIBLE-STUDY COURSE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

With this number appears the last instalment of this course. Question sheets containing twenty questions on the work of each month have been prepared and may be secured by all students who have enrolled as members of the INSTITUTE, upon application, with two cents for postage. The return of the question sheets filled out will entitle the student to a certificate for the course.

STUDY IX CHAPTER XIV

SERMONS IN DEFENSE OF THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS THE GOSPEL AND THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

*First day.—§ 87. The authorship and purpose of the Johannine writings (*I John, II John, III John, and the Gospel according to John*). Here, as in the case of so many other biblical books, scholars are frankly divided with respect especially to the question of authorship. An ancient and all but uniform tradition of the church attributes these four books to John, the Apostle of Jesus. Read the following passages and note the internal evidence which is held to corroborate this view: (a) the author's familiarity with Jewish history, customs, and ideas (*John 1:17; II:49, 51; 2:13; 7:2-13; 2:14-16; 5:10 ff.; 11:44; 2:20; 7:23*); (b) his acquaintance with the Old Testament and his habit of seeing in it direct prophecies concerning Jesus (*2:17, 22; 12:15, 38-41; 20:9*); (c) his familiarity with Hebrew (*1:38; 5:2; 9:7*), hence his Jewish origin; (d) his familiarity with the geography of Palestine, especially around Jerusalem; (e) his perfect devotion to Jesus (*20:30, 31; 3:16-21*); (f) his claims as an eyewitness of these events (*19:35; 21:24; cf. also 1:14 and I John 1:1-3*); (g) the testimony of John *21:20, 42*.*

On the other hand, not a few scholars believe that a Hellenistic Jew of the second century, perhaps a resident of Ephesus but now quite unknown, is the author of at least the Fourth Gospel; possibly, though not certainly, of the three letters also. Some think that *Mark 10:38, 39* (cf. *Acts 12:1-3*) points to the probable early death of John the apostle; they claim that several Johns are probably confused, that Jesus' disciple never certainly took up his abode in Asia Minor, and especially that he could hardly have changed enough from his early conservative position to become the author of such books as these.

Whether from one John or another, or whether put out under the apostle's name, as would have been possible according to the custom in those days, these

four books bear permanent messages to all ages. The first and second letters seek to strengthen the faith of Christian brethren, especially as against the influence of disturbing "heresies" which were creeping into the church (notably Liberalism and Docetism). The third letter is meant to encourage Gaius in his hospitality toward visiting Christian workers and to inform him of the writer's proposed visit. The Fourth Gospel seems to have been written in order, first, to oppose certain conceptions of God and the world which belittled or excluded the work of Christ; second, to denounce the doctrine of the messiahship of John the Baptist; and third, especially to show the importance of belief in Jesus as the revealer of God and the only way of gaining the joys of eternal life (20:31).

Glance over the following outline.

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

1. Introduction. The writer's message and his purpose in writing (1:1-4).
2. Christians to keep themselves from sin, walking in the light, and to seek forgiveness through Christ (1:5—2:17).
3. Not to be led astray by anti-Christs, but to abide in God (2:18-28).
4. The children of God to purify themselves; they that sin are not of God, but of the devil (2:29—3:12).
5. Christians will be hated by the world, but are to love one another in truth (3:13-24).
6. Spirits to be tested by what they say of Jesus (4:1-6).
7. Christians are to love one another and love God, because God loves them (4:7-21).
8. Love comes through faith, and faith rests on the testimony of God, and gives assurance of eternal life (5:1-13).
9. Christians to pray for one another's forgiveness (5:14-17).
10. Conclusion. The Christian's certainties (5:18-21).

Second day.—§ 88. *The first letter of John.* Read I John 1:1-4, noticing what the writer claims in this paragraph concerning his relation to Jesus (cf. John's Gospel 1:1-18, especially vs. 14). Read 1:5—2:17, noticing the strong emphasis which the writer puts upon the separation which exists between the world of light and the world of darkness, and upon the impossibility that the children of God should continue in sin. Note those things here indicated as characteristic of the children of God and the things which are impossible to them. Read 2:18-29, noticing the evidence that there are some who are endeavoring to lead astray those to whom the letter is written, and observing what truth the writer held which these false teachers denied. Read 3:1-12. Try to reconstruct, from these passages, the vital religious convictions which impelled the author to write.

Third day.—Read 3:13-24. In those trying days, what were the marks of Christian loyalty, as our author believed? Notice in 4:1-6 the recurrence of the same ideas expressed in 2:18 ff. What do these words imply as to the nature of the opposition felt and so solemnly denounced? How noble the character also that could utter such persuasive words as those in 4:7-21! Cf. 2:9-11 and 3:10, 14. Consult the analysis and read 5:1-13, also 2:18 ff., and 4:1 ff. again. Likewise read 5:14-21. It requires a man of great wealth of experience to utter such convictions in such intense fashion, does it not?

Fourth day.—§ 89. *The second and third letters of John.* Read the second letter of John. It is doubted and cannot be decided certainly whether “the elect lady” and her children are a Christian woman and her family or a church and its members. Read it first on the first supposition, noticing what the writer says of the children, and against whom he warns the lady and her children. Then read it on the second supposition. Read the third letter of John, noticing whom he commends and for what, and whom he condemns and for what. If the three letters of John were written toward the end of the apostolic age what picture do they afford us of the condition of the church as the New Testament period of the history of the church draws to a close?

Fifth day.—§ 90. *The prologue of the Fourth Gospel:* John 1:1–18. Note in vss. 1–5 a conception not elsewhere found in our Gospels. The term “Word” was familiar to the Greek readers of this gospel, signifying to them that through which, or a being through whom, God expresses and reveals himself to humanity. Our author, eager to defend Jesus as the unique, final, and all-sufficient revelation of God, interprets his own Christian experience thus into Greek thought: A heavenly Being, close to God from the beginning of time, and even sharing the divine nature as well as being the agent of all creation (vss. 1–3), has appeared among men to give them life and light; but humanity has failed to appreciate even so wonderful a revelation from God (vss. 4–5)! When men are on tiptoe asking where and how, and while some are saying it must have been John the Baptist, the answer comes in vss. 6–8 and 15: not John, but Jesus is the bearer of this light (vss. 9–14, 16–18). In what definite respects does the author regard Jesus as superior to both John and Moses? The following analysis, departing somewhat from the order of the Gospel as it stands to accord more nearly with what we believe to have been the original arrangement of these sermons, should be studied and followed with care.

ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

- I. The Prologue of the Gospel: The central doctrines of the book so expressed in terms of current thought as to relate the former to the latter and facilitate the transition from the latter to the former (1:1–18).
- II. The period of beginnings: John bears his testimony; Jesus begins to reveal himself; faith is begotten in some, and the first signs of opposition appear (1:19–4:54).
 1. The testimony of John and the beginnings of faith in Jesus (1:19–2:12).
 - a) The testimony of John to the representatives of the Jews (1:19–28).
 - b) John points out Jesus as the Lamb of God and the one whom he had come to announce (1:29–34).
 - c) John points out Jesus to his own disciples, and two of them follow Jesus (1:35–42).
 - d) Jesus gains two other followers (1:43–51).
 - e) In Cana of Galilee Jesus first manifests his glory in a sign and strengthens the faith of his disciples (2:1–12).
 2. Jesus in Jerusalem and Judea: opposition and imperfect faith (2:13–3:36).
 - a) The cleansing of the temple: opposition manifested (2:13–22).
 - b) Unintelligent faith based on signs in Jerusalem (2:23–25).

- c) In particular, Nicodemus is reproved and instructed (3:1-15).
- d) The motive and effect of divine revelation in the Son (3:16-21).
- e) The further testimony of John the Baptist to his own inferiority and Jesus' superiority (3:22-30).
- f) The supreme character of the revelation in the Son (3:31-36).
- 3. Jesus in Samaria, and the beginnings of work in Galilee (chap. 4).
 - a) Jesus' self-revelation to the Samaritan woman, and the simple faith of the Samaritans (4:1-42).
 - b) The reception of Jesus in Galilee, for the most part on the basis of signs seen, but in one case without waiting for such evidence (4:43, 45, 46a, 44, 46b-54).
- III. The central period of Jesus' ministry, to the end of his public teaching: Jesus declares himself more and more fully, many believe on him, and the faith of his disciples is strengthened, but the leaders of the nation reject him and resolve upon his death (chaps. 5-12).
 - 1. The feeding of the five thousand and attendant events leading to the discourse on Jesus as the Bread of Life, in consequence of which many leave him, but the Twelve believe in him more firmly (chap. 6).
 - 2. The healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, raising the Sabbath question and then the question of Jesus' relation to his Father, God (chap. 5).
 - 3. Jesus' marvelous wisdom (7:15-24).
 - 4. Secret hostility to Jesus. A few secretly defend him as "a good man" (7:1-13).
 - 5. His temple-sermons divide the people (7:14, 25-36, 45-52, 37-44).
 - 6. The necessity of faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the superior of Abraham (8:21-59).
 - 7. Jesus the Light of the World (9:1-41; 10:19-21; 8:12-20).
 - 8. Jesus the Good Shepherd and the Door of the Fold (10:22-29, 1-18).
 - 9. Jesus' oneness with the Father (10:30-42).
 - 10. The raising of Lazarus, and the teaching of Jesus concerning himself as the Resurrection and the Life (chap. 11).
 - 11. Jesus' last presentation of himself to the Jews of Jerusalem (chap. 12).
 - a) Jesus anointed by Mary at Bethany (12:1-11).
 - b) The triumphal entry (12:12-19).
 - c) The coming of the Gentiles to see Jesus: Jesus' announcement of his death and its results (12:20-36a).
 - d) Eternal life through Jesus (12:44-50).
 - e) Only the elect believe on him (12:36b-43).
 - IV. The fuller revelation of Jesus to his believing disciples (chaps. 13-17).
 - 1. The washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus, and the lesson of humility and service (13:1-20).
 - 2. The prediction of the betrayal, and the withdrawal of the betrayer (13:21-30).
 - 3. The farewell discourses of Jesus (13:31a; 15:1-16:33; 13:31b-35).
 - 4. Peter forewarned of his coming cowardice (13:36-38).
 - 5. Last instructions and encouragements (14:1-31).
 - 6. The final prayer: a revelation of Jesus' foreknowledge (17:1-26).

- V. The culmination and apparent triumph of hostile unbelief (chaps. 18, 19).
1. The arrest of Jesus (18:1-14).
 2. The trial before the Jewish authorities, and Peter's denial (18:19-24, 15-18, 25b-27).
 3. The trial before Pilate (18:28—19:16).
 4. The crucifixion (19:17-30).
 5. The burial (19:31-42).
- VI. The triumph of Jesus over death and his enemies: the restoration and confirmation of faith (chap. 20).
1. The empty tomb (20:1-10).
 2. The appearance of Jesus to Mary (20:11-18).
 3. The appearance to the disciples, Thomas being absent (20:19-25).
 4. The appearance to Thomas with the other disciples (20:26-29).
 5. Conclusion of the Gospel, stating the purpose for which it was written (20:30, 31).
- VII. Appendix (chap. 21).
1. Appearance of Jesus to the Seven by the Sea of Galilee, and his words concerning the tarrying of the beloved disciple (21:1-24).
 2. Second conclusion of the Gospel (21:25).

Sixth day.—§ 91. *The period of beginnings:* John 1:19—4:54. After reading 1:19—2:12, consider the following questions: What was John the Baptist's mission as this author looks at it from his second-century viewpoint (1:19-36)? Why have not the other Gospels taken notice of such important testimony? What is the significance of the titles applied to Jesus? According to this gospel, how does Jesus gain his first followers (1:37-51; cf. Mark 1:16-20)? What are the leading characteristics of Jesus, as here sketched? Keep a list of these as you read the Gospel. In 2:1-12 we are given a new miracle: the creation of 100 or more gallons of excellent wine out of water. What does Jesus accomplish by this demonstration? Note the importance of Cana and the comparative insignificance of Capernaum and Nazareth in this gospel.

Seventh day.—Read 2:13—3:36. Why does the author so strongly emphasize Jesus' work at Jerusalem, and touch so lightly upon the work at Capernaum, and why does he transfer the temple-cleansing to the beginning of his career (2:13-22)? How does this story differ from Mark's account (Mark 11:11, 15-18)? Does this represent Jesus as successful at first (2:23—3:21)? What further characteristics of Jesus does the author give in these verses? What warnings does he most earnestly present to his non-Christian readers? Again a careful contrast is drawn between John and Jesus (3:22-36). How would John's devoted followers in Ephesus receive these arguments? Put yourself in their place; then in the author's.

Eighth day.—Noting the slight changes in order suggested in the analysis, read chap. 4: (1) another John-Jesus contrast (vss. 1-3); (2) an illustrated sermon on "Jesus the Water of Life" (vss. 4-42). The other gospels keep his messiahship secret until the close of his Galilean work. Which is correct? (3) Another startling display of power at Cana (4:43-54; cf. Matt. 8:5-10). Does he gain most followers by miracles or by his teaching? How much progress has he made so far?

Ninth day.—§ 92. *The central period of Jesus' ministry:* chaps. 5-12. Note in 6:1-15 that, to the second-century Christians, Jesus' career was filled with “signs” of his divinity. His every word and act are studied for further evidence of this great fact. What kind of a “kingship” does Jesus avoid, and why? In what striking particulars does John 6:16-21 differ from Mark's account of this incident (Mark 6:45-52)? Read John 6:22-71 as a sermon on “Jesus the Bread of Life.” Which is the author's own interpretation of Jesus' thought, the literal (vss. 51, 55, 56) or the spiritual (vs. 63)?

Tenth day.—Chap. 5 should be read next. It presents “Jesus the Resurrection-life.” When may eternal life begin (vs. 24)? Just how does Jesus impart life to others (vs. 26)? How dependent is he himself upon God for his life and power (vss. 19, 20, 30)? Once again, what is the relation of John the Baptist (vss. 32-36) and of Moses (vss. 45, 46, 47) to Jesus, as our author sees it? Is it still possible that we may “know our Bibles,” and yet not experience the life and love of God (vss. 37-42)?

Eleventh day.—Read 7:15-24. To the author it is perfectly clear where Jesus gets his wisdom and power. In 7:1-13 which follows, how do various groups of people regard Jesus? (Cf. John 7:1 and Mark 10:1.) Does he flee from the north or to the north? What problems does Jesus raise among his opponents and his friends (7:14, 25-36, 45-52, 37-44, in this order)? The lines are being drawn more and more tightly. Note the warning which follows in tomorrow's reading.

Twelfth day.—Read 8:21-59. What, in the author's opinion, are the grave dangers of unbelief, and the blessings of a firm faith in Jesus? The “Word,” who had full sway over Jesus' life, was evidently thought of as having always existed (cf. 1:1): hence antedating Abraham, and even inspiring prophetic faith in that ancient Father of the nation; for the Word was the source of all life, even Abraham's (1:4). The passage 7:53—8:11 does not belong to this gospel. It is commonly found, in the last manuscripts, after Mark 12:44 or Luke 21. It seems authentic, and certainly represents the spirit of Jesus.

Thirteenth day.—“Jesus the Light of the World” is the theme of 9:1-41. How was the Light received in different quarters?

Fourteenth day.—10:19-21, followed by 8:12-20, continues yesterday's theme. Jesus' unusual power is recognized to some extent, but how is it accounted for (10:20, 21)? In what sense can Jesus enlighten the world (8:12)? How do you reconcile 9:39, already studied, and 8:15b? Is vs. 16 a compromise view? In what sense is Jesus a judge of men?

Fifteenth day.—Read 10:22-29 and then 10:1-18, two new presentations of Jesus: (1) as the “Good Shepherd”; (2) as the “Door of the Sheepfold.” What are the characteristics of Jesus as here given; of the “sheep”; of others who turn away from him?

Sixteenth day.—10:30-42 follows: “Jesus the Son of God.” How does our author here explain Jesus' relation to the Father? Is vs. 30 explained by 1:1 f.? (Cf. 17:21, 22; also Matt. 11:27.) How far does the thought of the Synoptic Gospels on this point differ from that of the Fourth Gospel? Read Ps. 82:6 with John 10:35, 36. What is the author's argument? Is he, a Jewish-Christian, eager to retain his monotheism and yet accord Jesus this exalted position? We have still another John-Jesus contrast in vss. 40-42. How many does this make in

all? Were John's followers in Ephesus likely to become Jesus' followers through these arguments? Why did the John-group persist for several centuries afterward, clinging to their Master John as the Christ?

Seventeenth day.—Another sermon on “Jesus the Resurrection and the Life.” Read chap. 11 (cf. Luke 10:38–42). In what sense is Jesus “our life”?

Eighteenth day.—In reading 12:1–36a, note Jesus’ appreciation of the devotion of his friends (vss. 1–8); note also the author’s continued emphasis upon miracle as the basis of belief (vss. 9–11). Cf. this account of the entry into Jerusalem with Mark’s (cf. John 12:12–19 with Mark 11:1–11). Looking back eighty years, our author now sees the gentile world coming to Jesus (vss. 20–22); but he remembers that this marvel has come about only through the sacrifice of Jesus (vss. 23–33), and, in spite of all the appeals of Jesus to his Jewish people (vss. 34–36a, 44–50), through the hardening of Jewish hearts to his message (vss. 36b–43).

Nineteenth day.—§ 93. *The fuller revelation of Jesus to his believing disciples:* chaps. 13–17. Read 13:1–20. How far could Jesus see into the future (vs. 1a)? Would foreknowledge of events help or hinder one’s career? What is Jesus’ greatest characteristic—the spirit which explains his power over men (vs. 1b)? Reviewing his career, in what definite ways did he “serve” his followers (vss. 15–17)? Did Jesus do all he could to prevent Judas’ treachery? Was Judas at fault, or predestined to do this and therefore blameless (vss. 18, 19)? Now read vss. 21–30.

Twentieth day.—Read 13:31a, followed by 15:1–27 which seems to fit better in this place. Just how much had Jesus done to bring these men into close fellowship with God (15:1–3)? What precautions and encouragements are here suggested for the safeguarding of the religious life (vss. 4–20)? Have men in general been fair to the claims of Jesus (vss. 21–25)? Have Jesus’ followers done their full duty as witnesses of his power and helpfulness (vss. 26, 27)?

Twenty-first day.—Read chap. 16 and 13:31b–35 which now fits in here. In reading 16:1–4a, cf. Mark 13:9–13. In reading vs. 5, note that, according to our better order, 13:36 has not yet come. It seems to be a later question. Years after Jesus’ death, could the church agree with the thought expressed in 16:7? What do vss. 8–15 suggest as to the actual history of the church between Jesus’ death and the writing of this gospel? By the second century many Christians were seriously doubting whether Jesus would ever return from Heaven. Does our author seek to solve this difficulty by his oft-repeated “a little while” and his assurance that Jesus really came as the Comforter (vs. 7b) at Pentecost? What great convictions of Jesus are adapted to sustain his followers in their hours of sore trial (16:32b, 33c; 13:34b, 35)?

Twenty-second day.—John 13:36–38 shows Peter’s splendid devotion to Jesus. May this passage have meant to the author that Peter did actually suffer martyrdom? The weakness of an hour shamed him into lifelong courage. Make a careful list of the encouragements to the Christian life which second-century Christians must have drawn from the words of chap. 14.

Twenty-third day.—Read, with especial care, chap. 17. Is it possible that the author has not so much reported an actual prayer of Jesus as ventured to ascribe to Jesus the kind of prayer which it seemed to him Jesus with his intimacy of fellowship and consequent foresight of the future would offer at such a time? Would Jesus, with his accustomed humility, and with his love for all men, have

been likely to say some of these words, which in another's thought of him might be justified? The author evidently feels, and expresses, great convictions drawn from his own vital Christian experience.

Twenty-fourth day.—§ 94. *The culmination and apparent triumph of hostile unbelief:* chaps. 18 and 19. Cf. 18:1–14 carefully with Mark's account of Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:43–52). How do you account for the striking differences? Note the new details in 18:19–24. Is it not strange the other gospel-writers did not include these events?

Twenty-fifth day.—Note the further new details in 18:15–18. Has the author of our gospel a special interest in this mysterious "other disciple"? Does he evidently refer to the apostle John? Is vs. 25a an editor's repetition (cf. vs. 18c) after inserting vss. 19–24? Read now vss. 25b–27, comparing Mark 14:66–72. More new details arise in John 18:28–32, and especially in vss. 33–40 (cf. Mark 15:1–5). Did this author have any authentic sources which the men of the previous eighty years were denied?

Twenty-sixth day.—Read 19:1–16 with Mark's briefer story (15:16–20). What new elements also in John 19:17–25? Is vs. 17 meant to correct Mark 15:21 and to deny the gnostic story that it was really Simon of Cyrene, not Jesus, who died upon the cross? Have you discovered many such deliberate changes from the earlier gospel narratives? Keep a list of such passages and mark them if possible, in a harmony of the Gospels, e.g., Stevens and Burton's *Harmony of the Gospels*.

Twenty-seventh day.—Does Mark (14:50 and 16:8) imply that the disciples fled to Galilee immediately after the crucifixion? Read John 19:25b–30. Did John alone of the Twelve have the courage to face the danger of being seen at the place of crucifixion? Note also the three new sayings from the cross (John 19:26, 28, 30; cf. the one saying in Mark 15:34, followed by Matthew, and three quite different ones in Luke 23:34, 43, 46). Which gospel is most likely to represent Jesus' dying thoughts correctly?

Twenty-eighth day.—Read 19:31–42, noting all the changes from the synoptic accounts of Jesus' burial. Can you explain these changes?

Twenty-ninth day.—§ 95. *The triumph of Jesus over death and his enemies:* chap. 20. Once again make a close comparison between these statements and the narratives given in the first three gospels; note the differences and explain the author's purpose in them. How does his book end (20:30, 31)?

Thirtieth day.—§ 96. *Appendix to the Fourth Gospel.* Chap. 21 is clearly an addition to the gospel already completed in 20:30, 31. Three purposes seem to be apparent in it: First, the writer wishes to give to Peter his place of importance which he doubtless held in the thought of the church (cf. Matt. 16:18), but which the body of this gospel had not given him. Secondly, he wished to reinforce the early tradition of Jesus' appearance in Galilee (Mark 16:7; Matt. 28:16), which had fallen away from Luke and the Fourth Gospel, though he does not even now make the first appearance to Peter, as Paul does (I Cor. 15:5). Thirdly, he wished to ascribe the authorship of the discourses distinctly to the disciple whom Jesus loved, doubtless meaning John. Perhaps also he wished to offset a certain discrediting of John arising from his death after it had been reported that Jesus had promised he should not die by affirming that Jesus did not precisely predict that John would not die, but only suggested the possibility that he would not.